

Closed church of Darlington St John: Statement of Significance and Needs
Faculty Petition OFS Application Ref: 2024-095664
Removal of contents from closed church.

SCHEDULE OF WORKS OR PROPOSALS:

A number of contents have already been moved out of the closed church for safe keeping and for use elsewhere by way of interim faculty or for safekeeping under provisions of the Mission & Pastoral Measure 2011. These items are highlighted in red for which this petition requests confirmatory faculty. Further items are requested to be removed from the closed church for the purposes of security, safe keeping and continued use and enjoyment elsewhere in the community. Where these are to be introduced into other churches the appropriate faculty permissions will be needed by the relevant PCC:

1. Items requested to go to Darlington St Herbert's church:

- i. All church plate and silver (taken to St Herbert's for safekeeping - refer to inventory.)
- ii. 2no. Books of Remembrance and display stand.
- iii. Bluetooth speaker and ipad (already taken to St Herbert's)
- iv. Stations of the Cross - modern boards covered with Perspex - already taken to St Herbert's)
- v. Great War Memorial Triptych (Copper & Brass – located n. side of chancel arch)
- vi. 2no. churchwarden's wands fixed to pew ends.
- vii. 1no. Mothers Union banner (C20th banner with image of Mary)
- viii. The Mouseman wooden lectern (mouse carved into the base of stand, not in relief).
- ix. 2no. Priests' name boards hanging in Nave, each side of the West tower doorway.
- x. 2no. Royal Legion Banners - (already taken for safekeeping and for return to British Legion Darlington.)
- xi. 2no. Girl Guides & 1no. Brownies Banners – (already taken to St Herbert's church hall for safekeeping and with agreement to be given to the parishioner Valerie Cadd.)

2. Items requested to go to Bishop Auckland Hospital Chapel (Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation):

- xii. Sanctuary brass aumbry.

3. Items requested to go to the Little House of Hope in Thornley:

- xiii. Smart portable wooden carved font with cover.

4. Items requested to go to St John's Church of England Primary School:

- xiv. World War I Memorial, west end n. aisle (belonged to former St John's Primary School.)
- xv. World War I Memorial, west end of n. aisle (belonged to former St John's Primary School.)
- xvi. Associated brass plaque of the Bishop of Durham's 2014 rededication of the two memorials.

5. Items requested to go to Darlington St Cuthbert's church for keeping and continued use:

- xvii. 48 piece complete set of hand ringing bells (already taken to St Cuthbert's for safekeeping.)
- xviii. Peel boards from tower bell-ringing chamber
- xix. Wooden hymn book trolley with brass plaque dedicated in memory of Rosetta Mary Fletcher d. 10.07.1998. (Also plaque for hymn books in memory of Nancy Doreen Hepper)



6. Items requested to go to Geneva Road Cemetery Chapel:

- xx. ceremonial crucifix (processional cross)
- xxi. votive candle stand
- xxii. upholstered chairs
- xxiii. small wall mounted crucifix
- xxiv. crucifix, large jug and candle holders (previously used by the Traveller Community)
- xxv. High altar crucifix and candle stands
[All above items already taken to the Geneva Road Chapel]
- xxvi. External timber (blue) church noticeboard – to be repurposed for use at the Chapel.

7. Items requested to go to Haswell St Paul's church:

- xxvii. Large wooden paschal candle holder of octagonal column section.

8. Requests for additional private memorial items and plaques to be returned to families:

- xxviii. Black metal flower stand with brass plaque in memory of the late Joyce Hodgson – *requested to be returned to her daughter, Margaret Hodgson.*
- xxix. 2no. altar rail brass plaques in memory of Mr & Mrs Sanderson – *requested to be returned to her daughter, Elsie Harvey.*
- xxx. Brass plaque in memory of Mr William Wilson, (located n. aisle window reveal) – *requested to be returned to his son, Jim Wilson.*
- xxxi. Brass plaque in memory of Yvonne Ward, d. 08.06.2006 (located s. aisle window reveal) – *requested to be returned to her brother, Samuel Ward.*

The following brass memorial plaques to be removed and taken into the care of the church of Darlington St Herbert, until such point as they might be returned to family members:

- xxxii. In memory of Paul Anderson 26.08.1979 – 02.04.2010.
- xxxiii. In memory of Walter, Louie, Walter & Nicole Porritt (no dates).
- xxxiv. In memory of James Allison 09.08.1837 – 20.05.1919.

9. Other Requests:

- xxxv. 'Ceremonial mallet and plaque' used by George Hudson 'The Railway King' to lay foundation stone at St John's to go to Hopetown Darlington Museum, (*Formerly 'The Head of Steam'*)
- xxxvi. 2no. embroidered altar frontals and an embroidered Mothers Union Banner to be relocated to the Bowes Museum collection, Barnard Castle, for appropriate storage and care.
- xxxvii. Needlepoint Last Supper framed picture to go to Mrs Joan Gilmore, of St Cuthbert's Parish.



Statement of Significance – The Church:

The closed church of St Darlington St John is grade II listed ([1322932](#)) and lies within the [Parkgate Conservation Area](#). The 2022 CBC report ([PM 2591](#)) assesses the church's significance.



Church Description (CBC Report PM [2455](#)): *“Parish church, founded by Darlington, St Cuthbert 1845 as district church... Built 1847-9 to designs by John Middleton of Darlington; Early English style; consecrated 1853; vestries 1900 by W S Hicks, partly rebuilt and extended to W 1960s and 2005 for a kitchen...of moderate significance overall.”* The Parkgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal highlights: *“Landmark features and important views, including the striking St John’s Church above the double railway bridge which reflects the railway development and history of the area...”*

The church has a long association both with the Railway and with the Traveller Community.

The church was closed for worship 1st August 2023 through a scheme made by the Church Commissioners under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. The property is on the market for sale and with potential to be put to one of a number of appropriate new uses. Putting the building to a sustainable and appropriate new use will inevitably require some alteration of the church building, the extent of which will depend on the requirements of that new use. The Church Commissioners will not sell the closed church until all necessary planning permissions and listed building consents have been secured for the intended new use, and following the outcome of a public consultation process.

The church occupies a prominent position on Bank Top opposite the rail station redevelopment and next to the Darlington Central business district. The church and tower are highly visible by approach from street level, road and rail. Also situated in a ward which ranks highly on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the church building suffers from some fabric and security issues: the tower is roof is failing with substantial rain water ingress and, as an unoccupied building, it is vulnerable to anti-social activity. The closed church and its contents retain the affection of many in the local community and the parishioners whose ministry served it for many years. This petition is the result of the need to ensure continued use and display of many of the contents, and to ensure other items are removed for secure collection, storage and safeguarding.

See [Appendix A](#) for photographs of the church exterior and interior.

Fixtures, Contents & furnishings –

Historic England grade II Official List Entry [1322932](#):

“PRINCIPAL FIXTURES: The 19th-century fixtures and fittings are largely complete. The choir stalls have poppy head bench ends. There is a good polygonal stone pulpit decorated with niches flanked by polished marble shafts with white marble figures in the niches: it has a cornice decorated with stiff -leaf foliage and has a circular stem with polished marble shafts and brass barley sugar standards to the handrail to the



steps. The font is polygonal with a bowl and stem in one and has Early English arcading round it. The 19th-century benches have shouldered ends and panels with blind flamboyant tracery. The nave has a timber dado of 1932. The stained glass includes a high-quality E window depicting the Ascension. There is an unusual First World War memorial, a small Arts and Crafts triptych with a beaten metal image of a knight in the centre as the upright of a red enamel St George's cross with brass panels inscribed with names, to the wings."

CBC Report 2591: *"The church is not richly furnished. Most items are relatively plain. The windows are predominantly plain-glazed, although the four that have stained glass (including the triple-light E window) are attractive enough. Few items are definitively part of the original fit-out, as it appears that the congregational and choir seating may be somewhat later. The altar and font reliably date from the original furnishing. Both have suffered damage... Some stand-out items of the period 1885-1920 among a quite plain Victorian furnishing scheme. It would be worth taking advice from an ICON-accredited conservator about the war memorials, to avoid any damage from over-cleaning."*

Statement of Needs:

Since closure on 1st August 2023, the Diocese of Durham and Church Commissioners for England have been seeking to put the closed church of Darlington St John to an appropriate new use. Under the provisions of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011, a pastoral (disposal) scheme will be drafted and put up for public consultation by the Church Commissioners, proposing to put the property to an agreed and appropriate new use, following a marketing process. Professional advice is being taken from agents and the property is currently on the open market for sale (not restricted to any specific uses). Interest in the property may range from conversion to residential units to putting to a community or commercial use, for which planning and listed building consents will likely be required. The appropriate new use will need to be sustainable and wholly sympathetic to the history and significance of the grade II listed church.

The building is in fair condition overall but its fabric is at risk of deterioration whilst it remains closed and in the use-seeking period. The tower roof is in very poor condition and need of repair. As with any church building which has been closed for worship and is unoccupied, there is a need to meet the requirements of insurers as well as a need to safeguard the contents of the building to ensure their immediate security and to find an appropriate new home, in anticipation of putting the property to a new use. None of the contents proposed to be removed are fittings or fixtures that would require listed building consent for their removal.

Careful consideration has been given to ensure a relocation of contents to the parish church of St Herbert and to St Cuthbert and other churches as appropriate. The Triptych war memorial is wanted for continued display at St Herbert's church whilst the other two war memorials are requested to be returned to St John's Primary School, to have continued display in the community there. Some liturgical items are requested by the Geneva Road Cemetery Chapel and other chapels to have continued use. Other contents are proposed to go to local or regional museums and the remaining items to families and parishioners.

The church is now closed for worship and the contents which are proposed to be moved in the following schedule can no longer serve their intended purpose and can no longer be freely visited and seen by the public. Although the removal of contents may have impact upon the character and significance of the church interior (particularly the Triptych World War I Memorial), this is far outweighed by the benefit of safeguarding these items and securing with new homes for appropriate care, enjoyment and future use or display within the parish, local community and the wider region.

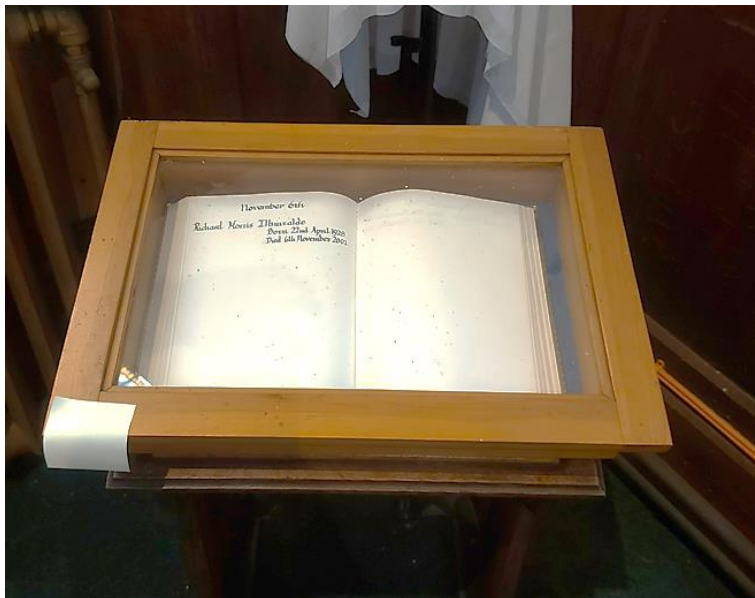


1. **Items requested to go to Darlington St Herbert's church:** [Refer to supporting document [Appendix B](#)]
- i. **All church plate and silver (taken to St Herbert's for safekeeping - refer to inventory.)**
Please refer to [Appendix C](#) for full inventory and photographs.



The collection has already been taken to the safe of St Herbert's church, under interim faculty, for immediate safekeeping, storage and some for future use. St Herbert's current chalice is now slightly out of shape and also doesn't sit completely flat on a surface. The above item (Silver Ciborium in memory of Bill Smith, Churchwarden '67-'77) would have continued regular use at St Herbert's. Other plate items may be used or given secure storage until a future home is proposed.

- ii. **2no. Books of Remembrance and display case and stand.**



Need: To safeguard the items. As there are a number in St Herbert's congregation from St John's, some of whom will have family members listed in these books, it is requested the books stay within the Parish alongside the many names of those also from the newly sized Parish in years gone by.

- iii. **Bluetooth speaker and ipad (no pictures - already taken to St Herbert's)**

Need: St Herbert's does not have a bluetooth speaker system and requests have been made when taking Funerals and other services. It would be very practical when no organist is available.



iv. **Stations of the Cross - modern boards covered with Perspex - already taken to St Herbert's)**



Need:

The St John's perspex laminated set of prints are redundant and St Herbert's current stations are only roll up versions stuck to the church walls each year. The set in Perspex are more durable and would stand nicely into each of the covered windows along both sides of the church.

v. **Triptych World War I Memorial (Copper & Brass – located n. side of chancel arch – maker unknown)**



IWM War Memorial Register 41797

North East War Memorials Project
([Ref: D40.047](#))

CBC Report: "Even more significant is the parish war memorial, which is in the form of a wooden triptych containing panels of beaten copper and brass, with chasing and repousse work and an enamel cross in deep red."

Historic England Official List Entry: "There is an unusual First World War memorial, a small Arts and Crafts triptych with a beaten metal image of a knight in the centre as the upright of a red enamel St George's cross with brass panels inscribed with names, to the wings."

The Need: To safeguard its future to reside in the Parish and be put on continued display where its serving members and their families live. To fit in the corner at the front side of St Herbert's church, above the current position of the remembrance book (which is to be moved.) (**Separate faculty required for introduction**).



vi. 2no. churchwarden's wands fixed to pew ends.



vii. 1no. Mothers Union banner (C20th banner with image of Mary)



This banner to be taken into the church (under separate faculty permissions). Discussion has been had with the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle, for Future arrangements to be made for taking it into collection or appropriate storage should it ever become redundant at St Herbert's.



viii. **The Mouseman wooden lectern** (mouse carved into the base of stand, not in relief).



“The original lectern was made of dark oak and was adorned by a golden eagle . In 1953 the eagle was removed and in 1962 a new lectern was installed. This lectern is a Robert (Mouseman) Thompson creation.”

Mrs V. Cadd & Mr G. Plummer: ‘A brief history of the Church of St John the Evangelist’



“In Memory of Frederick Stainsby, Born 1880, Died 1960. Organist of this church for Fifty Years.”

ix. **2no. Priests’ name boards hanging in Nave**, each side of the West tower doorway.



- x. **2no. Royal Legion Banners** - (already taken for safekeeping and for return to British Legion
British Legion Women's Section Standard:



British Legion Men's Section Standard:



- xi. **2no. Girl Guides & 1no. Brownies Banners** – (already taken to St Herbert's church hall for safekeeping and with agreement to be given to the parishioner Valerie Cadd.)



2. Items requested to go to Bishop Auckland Hospital Chapel (Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation):

xii Sanctuary brass aumbry.



The statement of need: To ensure continued use and safekeeping:

The aumbry is redundant and in need of a new home for continued liturgical use. It has been requested by the Hospital Chaplains of Bishop Auckland Hospital Chapel.

The Revd Kevin Tromans: "This is simple. There are patients in Bishop Auckland Hospital who would value sacramental care but at present there is no place for the chaplain to keep the sacrament (or holy oil) for this purpose. Unfortunately I can't provide [exact] photograph of where it can go in the chapel until we actually have sight and physical presence of it, simply because until we know its weight and dimensions we can't arrange with the works team a visit to determine its place.

I have however attached a photograph of the chapel itself in which you will see there are a number of window niches: it is either into one, or between two of these, that I would envisage the tabernacle being placed, on a shelf placed there for that purpose."



3. **Items requested to go to the Little House of Hope in Thornley:**

- xii. Smart portable wooden carved font with cover.



Need: To ensure continued use and safe keeping.

The Revd Daniel Hudson: "A request from Little House of Hope in Thornley. We would like a font for our new church plant. Our church is a little over a year old and is sited in a refurbished community centre. It's not particularly big, and we're looking for a small-ish portable wooden font. We have our first baptism on 3rd September 2024."



4. Items requested to go to St John's Church of England Primary School:

xiv: World War I Memorial, west end n. aisle (Old Boys of former St John's Primary School.)



North East War Memorials Project ([Ref D40.049](#)):

Unveiled 12th May 1923 by Ltut, Co. Fisher; dedicated by Rev. A. S. Thompson.

Brass with oak frame. Plaque 1 foot 8 inches high x 2 feet 6 inches wide (508mm x 762mm) surrounded by oak frame (990mm x 1.06m)

The first plaque is in memory of 'old boys' of St. John's School, Yarm Road who sacrificed their lives. The plaque is made of brass and has an oak frame. There are 119 names inscribed. There are no ranks of the men on the memorial at the request of Mr. Broughton, Headteacher, because, 'whatever their distinction in that respect they were all my lads'.



xv: World War I War Memorial Roll of Honour Former Pupils 1914-18 St John Cof E School



North East War Memorials Project ([Ref:D40.050](#))

Unveiled 12th May 1923 by Lieut. Col. Fisher; dedicated by Rev. A.S. Thompson.

Roll of Honour. Oak frame. Paper behind glass. 762mm x 508mm in similar frame to D40.049. "Beautifully Illuminated"

"The second plaque is a Roll of Honour naming all ex pupils and staff of the school who served in the war. It has an oak frame and there are 350 names recorded.

Both plaques were first unveiled and erected in the hall of St. John's School on 12th May 1923 and were rededicated by The Bishop of Durham, on Remembrance Sunday 2014 to mark the 100 years commemoration of the beginning of WW1."

Mrs V. Cadd & Mr G. Plummer: 'A brief history of the Church of St John the Evangelist'



CBC Report: “From a generation later are three memorials of the Great War. Two were transferred from St John’s School, one a standard brass plaque in an architectural wooden frame, the other a roll of honour on paper, a superb display of calligraphy with a watercolour vignette of the schoolhouse flanked by military trophies and scenes of the war at sea. Was Darlington a naval town, then, despite being inland? This is of moderate significance.”

xvi. Associated brass plaque of the Bishop of Durham’s 2014 rededication of the two memorials.



Proposed location in school entrance.

The Need: [Refer to supporting correspondence from Mr M Ramsay]

Mr Marco Ramsay Headteacher St. John’s CE Academy: “I was recently made aware by Valerie Cadd, our Chair of Governors and a long-time worshipper at St. John’s Church, that the church houses two memorials from the Great War that were once located in the original St. John’s School, which was closed in the 1970s. One of the memorials details the former pupils of St. John’s who died during the war; and the other details the pupils and staff who served.

“I am writing to request that, due to the closure of the church, the memorials be relocated to our school. Having them in the building would provide the children with many learning opportunities – not just historical but also around our Christian and British Values such as Justice, Courage, Peace, Gratitude and Hope. Indeed, many of our children share surnames with those on the memorial and using web-based census data, it would be possible to determine whether they were related to a former soldier.”



5. Items requested to go to Darlington St Cuthbert's church for keeping and continued use

[Refer to [Appendix D](#) – Hand Bells and Peal Boards]

xvii. 48 piece complete set of hand ringing bells (already taken to St Cuthbert's for safekeeping.)



Howard Smith – Durham Diocesan Bells Advisor

Report on Darlington St John's Hand Ringing Bells & Peal Board:

There is also a set of Handbells at St. John's which it would again be the intention to remove, on loan, to St. Cuthbert's at Darlington where they would be cared for and used. These handbells are of course of some value and need to be kept in a secure place.

The other articles of ringing ephemera that are to be stored at St. Cuthberts are excepting the peal boards that are of course unique to St. John's... All in all the only articles of historic interest are the peal boards. Peal boards are found in many Churches and they record special ringing occasions such as 1. The first peal on the bells 2. Occasions of national rejoicing and mourning 3. events of major interest to the locality.

These boards will be stored safely at St. Cuthbert's hopefully until such time that they can return to St. John's.

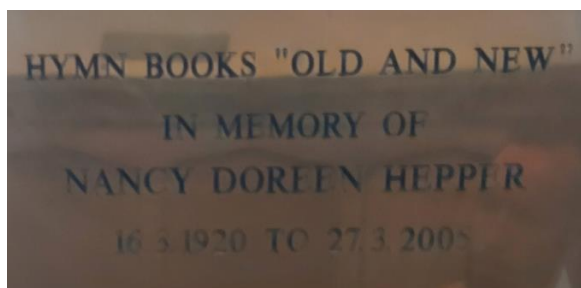


xviii. Peal boards from tower bell-ringing chamber



Need: The bell tower is suffering from rainwater ingress and condensation to the walls. The boards have been removed from the bell ringing chamber but there is need to secure the peal boards, as per the advice of the Diocesan Bells Adviser (above)

xix. **Wooden hymn book trolley with brass plaque dedicated in memory of Rosetta Mary Fletcher d. 10.07.1998. (Also plaque for hymn books in memory of Nancy Doreen Hepper)**



Need: For use in St Cuthbert's Church Hall when licenced for worship during works to the church building and for future use.



6. Items requested to go to Geneva Road Cemetery Chapel:

[Refer to [Appendix E](#) for supporting information]

The following items were relocated to the Chapel under interim faculty provisions:

xx. ceremonial crucifix (processional cross)

xxi. votive candle stand

xxii. upholstered chairs

xxiii. small wall mounted crucifix

xxiv. crucifix, large jug and candle holders (previously used by the Traveller Community)

xxv. High altar crucifix and candle stands





Items historically borrowed and used by the Traveller Community for at-home services:

PCC Request: "It was discussed that [St Herbert's PCC] would like clear assurances that the items the traveller community request on spec for their funerals would still be granted and made available to them if they are transferred to Geneva Road Chapel - we have already been approached ourselves on this that it could still continue in the same manner as before."

xxvi. External timber (blue) church noticeboard – to be repurposed for use at the Chapel.



7. Items requested to go to Haswell St Paul's church:

xxvii. Large wooden paschal candle holder of octagonal column section.



The Need: For continued use of church liturgical items.

St Paul's church's paschal candle holder is damaged and in poor condition and need of replacement. Separate permissions to be sought to introduce into St Paul's church.



8. Requests for additional private memorial items and plaques to be returned to families:

xxviii. Black metal flower stand with brass plaque in memory of the late Joyce Hodgson – requested to be returned to her daughter, Margaret Hodgson.



In memory of
Joyce Hodgson
11.4.33 – 11.12.05
Loving and devoted wife of
Ernie
And Mother of
John, Philip and Margaret
Member of St. Johns Church
Choir

xxix. 2no. altar rail brass plaques in memory of Mr & Mrs Sanderson – requested to be returned to her daughter, Elsie Harvey.



1. William A Sanderson
6th April 1987 R.I.P.
Be still and know that I am
God

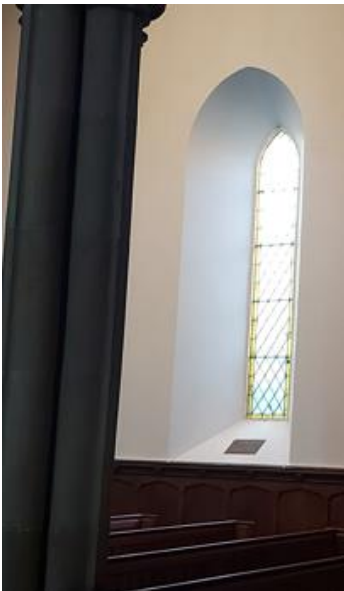
2. To the Glory of God
And in Memory of
Mary Sanderson
R.I.P.
20 November 1970



- xxx. Brass plaque in memory of Mr William Wilson, (located n. aisle window reveal) – requested to be returned to his son, Jim Wilson.



- xxxi. Brass plaque in memory of Yvonne Ward, d. 08.06.2006 (located s. aisle window reveal) – requested to be returned to her brother, Samuel Ward.

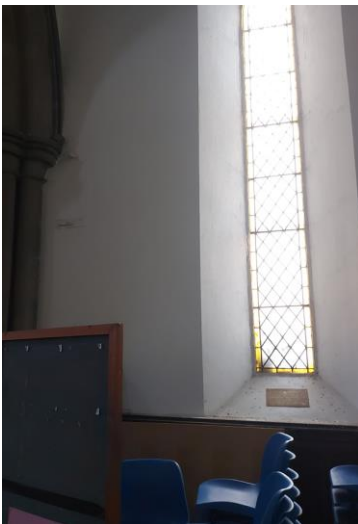


The following brass memorial plaques to be removed and taken into the care of the church of Darlington St Herbert, for safekeeping, until such point as they might be returned to family members:

xxxii. In memory of Paul Anderson 26.08.1979 – 02.04.2010 (n. aisle blank window reveal –e.end)



xxxiii. In memory of Walter, Louie, Walter & Nicole Porritt -no dates (w. end of n.aisle)



xxxiv. In memory of James Allison 09.08.1837 – 20.05.1919. (located s. aisle window reveal)



8. Other Requests:

xxxv. 'Ceremonial mallet and plaque' used by George Hudson 'The Railway King' to lay foundation stone at St John's to go to Hopetown Darlington Museum, (Formerly 'The Head of Steam')



“The foundation stone was laid by George Hudson M.P. Lord Mayor of York on the 10th. September 1847. A large , heavy , mushroom shaped mallet was used to complete the laying of the foundation stone. At the end of the mallet there is a brass plate which is inscribed:

‘Presented to Nathaniel Plews , Esq., Chairman of the Great North of England Railway on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Church of St. John, Darlington by George Hudson, Esq. M.P. Lord Mayor of York and Chairman of the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railway as a slight acknowledgement for his actions in furthering the erection of the building , 10th September ,1847.’

“The mallet was missing for a number of years. Then in 1965 the proprietors of the Lynton House Hotel in Margate discovered it in their attic and they asked the first person from the Darlington area that came to stay with them to return it to the church.”

Mrs V. Cadd & Mr G. Plummer: *‘A brief history of the Church of St John the Evangelist’*

Need: Requested by Hopetown Museum Station Road, Darlington, DL3 6ST - for preservation within the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter – permanent acquisition for collection and display of local and regional history.



xxxvi. 2no. embroidered altar frontals and an embroidered Mothers Union Banner to be relocated to the Bowes Museum collection, Barnard Castle, for appropriate storage and care.



There is no longer a textile conservator on the staff at The Bowes Museum, so it is very unlikely that any work to improve the condition and appearance of the altar frontals, in particular, could happen soon. It is likely that, after a cursory surface clean by me, the altar frontals would go into store. The same would be true of the banners.

The Bowes Museum already has ecclesiastical embroidery in its collection, acquired by Joséphine and John Bowes, and supplemented by the gift of textiles and vestments from the Poor Clares of Darlington in 2007. This is largely Catholic material and it's for this reason [the Bowes Museum] is keen to acquire the historic examples from So John's. [We] hope to be able to exhibit them in future, once they have been conserved, within the fashion and textile timeline in the permanent gallery, and in the meantime, they would be available for study.

Bowes Museum Curator of Fashion & Textiles

The Need: To prevent loss and/or further deterioration of artistic fabric and to ensure the appropriate storage, care and provision for study and potential conservation repair and public display.



xxxvii. Needlepoint Last Supper framed picture to go to Mrs Joan Gilmore, of St Cuthbert's Parish.



The Need: To prevent loss and/or further deterioration of item and to provide future home.

07 August 2024
Dan Spraggon
Church Buildings Support Officer
Durham Diocese

